

Documents Show Sprint Challenged NSA in 2009



Washington, May 17 (RHC)-- Years before Edward Snowden pulled back the curtain on the National Security Agency (NSA), the spy agency shared the legal basis behind its phone data collection with Sprint.

Top-secret documents released by the Barack Obama administration now show that the phone company asked for details about the contested NSA program in 2009, well before it was made public through Snowden's leaks.

To avoid a formal legal challenge to the program, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which oversees the NSA, allowed the government to discuss the legal basis of the program with the company in 2010. It also extended the time period for Sprint to continue "ongoing discussions" before filing a petition, "in the parties' mutual interests in avoiding litigation." After that, the firm dropped its protests.

In a joint statement issued in Washington, the U.S. Justice Department and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence described the exchange as a "robust interaction." The name of the telephone company was redacted in the court documents, although The Washington Post has now identified it as Sprint.

A spokeswoman with the company did not deny that it was behind the questioning, and praised the declassification. Stephanie Vinge said: "Sprint believes that substantive legal grounding should be

provided when the government requests customer information from carriers. Sprint has a longstanding commitment to protecting our customers' privacy and will challenge an order for customer information that we don't think complies with the law."

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